

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

45264

25 March 1949

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 151

SUBJECT: Probable Significance of Bulganin-Vasilevski Shift

1. The replacement of Marshal Bulganin, as Minister of the Armed Forces, by Marshal Vasilevski relieves another Politburo member from operational ministerial duties, presumably for greater concentration on policy matters. This latest appointment continues the trend in Soviet administration of relieving deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers from their duties as heads of specific ministries. In view of the lack of Soviet victories in the cold war, the Kremlin is probably also taking steps to place greater emphasis on strengthening the Soviet orbit; the relief of Bulganin, therefore, does not point to preparations for early external military ventures. Instead, Bulganin may assume a leading role in the integration of Eastern European military power, just as Molotov and Mikoyan are probably assigned to the task of strengthening Soviet-Satellite political and economic unity.

2. This shift, similar to other recent personnel changes, has transferred ministerial responsibility to a technician, Marshal Vasilevski, who has had a distinguished army career. Bulganin's background has been political rather than military, and he was apparently made Minister of Armed Forces in order to strengthen the Party's political and ideological control of the services. However, Bulganin, as the Politburo member responsible for military affairs, will probably retain over-all policy level control of the armed forces.

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